



JANUARY NEWSLETTER

January 31, 2012

Today's topics:

- We're riding on high on our success in 2011
- 2012 starts with a burst of energy and the delivery of **674** comfort scarves
- We received an enthusiastic response from vendors at **TNNA**
- Yarn donors are very generous
- Shelters are so grateful
- Affiliates donate scarves in their own locales
- **Handmade's** fabulous volunteers
- The **Alexander Skarsgard** fan club came through for **Handmade**
- Making comfort scarves promotes mental health
- What **Handmade** needs in 2012

And now for the details:

With lots of hard work throughout the year and intense end-of-the-year scarfing, we reached our goal of distributing **15,000 comfort scarves** on December 16, 2011. We added at least 10 new shelters to the 43 we already served. This was a great achievement. We couldn't have reached it without the contributions of every volunteer, every scarfer, every donor, and every yarn company who participated in our project.

Building on the successes of 2011, we have started 2012 with a huge burst of energy. We had so many scarves to process from donations that continued to arrive throughout December that we had to have two wrapping parties to get them all ready. That was a lot of work, but we had a lot of fun too. In January, **we donated 674 comfort scarves to 36 shelters**. We did something different this year. **Annie Alpers**, a volunteer who has supported Handmade since its inception, contacted every shelter to find out how many comfort scarves they needed. It turns out some want monthly donations,

some want every other month, some want quarterly and a few want Mother's Day and Christmas only. Making all the calls was a big job. Thank you, Annie.

Thanks to our sponsor, **June Grossberg**, owner of **Concepts in Yarn**, I was able to attend **The National NeedleArts Association Trade Show** at the Phoenix Civic Center in Phoenix AZ. There, I took the opportunity to thank the many, many yarn companies who donated to Handmade in 2011, tell them what we had accomplished, and request support for our project in 2012. Most of the companies were well aware of Handmade and were very impressed by our achievement in 2011. Almost all promised support in 2012 and a few even donated on the spot. I returned at the end of show with several big suitcases in the trunk of my car. **Paul Meznarich** of **Plymouth Yarn** filled one suitcase. I walked it back to the car and went back with another empty suitcase. **Tymon Warda**, at **Knitting Fever** filled that one. **Bjorn and Rex**

Tannahill of Hand Painted Knitting Yarns donated a skein of their beautiful yarn. **Beth**, at **Lorna's Laces**, donated 3 skeins of their beautiful yarn. All in all, **TNNA** was a very heady experience for me.

Yarn companies continue to support our project. We have received generous donations from **Norman Bagley** at **Westminster Fibers Canada** and from **Diane McKay** and **Leslie Taylor** at **Mountain Colors**. **Susan Druding**, at **Crystal Palace Yarns**, our most constant donor, sent a huge 30+ pound box. We so appreciate the generosity of all these companies. We couldn't make our comfort scarves without their contributions.

The shelters continue to appreciate our comfort scarves. Here are a few examples of the heartwarming words of appreciation from the several of our shelters:

"We want to take this opportunity to thank you immensely for your thoughtful donation of handmade comfort scarves. Our clients and their children had a wonderful Christmas and can't thank you enough for your kindness. The ladies commented on the uniqueness of the beautiful scarves – there was one for each individual personality." **Desert Sanctuary**, Barstow CA

"Your gift of 25 comfort scarves gives women and children a promise to fulfill a dream of a home and life without violence, and an end to the intergenerational cycle of violence." Richard Kravetz, **Domestic Violence Solutions**, Santa Barbara CA

"Thank you so much for the Comfort Scarves. . . . All of our clients who received one were very grateful. . . . Although for many the holidays are a joyous occasion, for many of our clients it is a bitter sweet time. It means a lot to our clients to have the support of people like you." **DOVES**, Big Bear Lake CA

"Words can't express how much happiness you bring to those who receive the scarves. Thank you." Gina Galindo, **Fred Jordan Missions**, Covina CA

"Genesis House truly appreciates the scarves that you all so preciously designed." Deniece Marshall, **Genesis House**, Riverside CA

"Please extend our deepest gratitude to everyone who knitted these lovely 'gifts of love'. . . . You are helping us provide for these families who so desperately need our help to become whole again. . . . We know that each and every participant in your program will be blessed many times over for every knit and purl that went into lovingly making these gifts." Diana Spitz, **Kathy's House**, San Juan Capistrano CA

"Thank you so much for thinking of Shelter From the Storm by donating 40 beautiful handmade comfort scarves. . . . your thoughtfulness and generosity are very much appreciated especially during these times of draconian budget cuts. . . ." Lynn Moriarty, **Shelter From the Storm**, Palm Desert CA

"Thank you for your gift of 36 scarves Your gift generates encouragement, as well as material support. As we celebrate the season of hope, you rekindle our faith in the human spirit." Shari Roeseler, **St Anthony's**, San Francisco CA

"Thank you and all the women who put in so much time, effort, and love in making comfort scarves for the women in our shelter. At a time in their lives when there should be joy and happiness, these women are struggling to care for themselves and their children. These scarves not only provide physical warmth but also emotional warmth and well-being to them. Your donation has helped restore their faith and put smiles on their faces." Carol Crabson, **Valley Oasis**, Lancaster CA

"Thank you so much for thinking of our women. Some of their responses were: 'Look how beautiful they are.' 'I have never had anything that was handmade before.' 'This is beautiful.' 'The time

they must have put into this.’ ‘I am so thankful someone cared.’ Your thoughtfulness helped validate their self worth and moved them a step closer toward empowerment.” Margaret Diaz, **Victor Valley Domestic Violence**, Victorville CA.

Reading comments such as these reaffirms my commitment to Handmade’s mission. I never expected a comfort scarf would be so powerful in helping women overcome the negative effects of domestic violence, but as we see from what the directors tell us, our comfort scarves are very important. We all have to keep on making the many, many comfort scarves we will need in 2012.

Susan Van Winkle, leader of our San Diego CA affiliate, also had a big year in 2011. She reports that her group donated 1361 items, including 337 scarves as well as numerous baby items, lap blankets, hats and other items. Good job, Susan.

Ann Miller reports that the Pueblo CO branch of **Handmade** donated 121 comfort scarves in 2011. She donated their scarves to the local YWCA and Family Crisis Center. Good job to you, too, Ann!

Renee Hoffman, leader of our Long Beach CA affiliate, delivered 20 scarves to **Interval House** in January. Renee’s commitment has been outstanding. Sometimes she personally provides all the yarn; sometimes she personally knits all the scarves. This month, she wrote me a note explaining her dedication. “I really love making scarves and feeling that I am making a small difference to improve lives. My first husband was an abuser and I was fortunate to have a job and the support of my parents to leave. For those who are not as fortunate, I know that **Interval House** and other organizations are there to help women and break the cycle of abuse.” Incredible giving back, isn’t it! Thank you for sharing your story, Renee.

Barb Kochuba, founder of the Pittsburgh PA branch of **Handmade**, is expanding her organization. After donating at least 2,000 scarves in 2011, she has reached out to more shelters and expects to increase her donations by 30% in 2012.

She worried and worried how would she be able to accomplish this, but then, just like magic, more boxes of comfort scarves started showing up on her doorstep. Barb and I have a lot in common. Her experience reminds me of how I felt last year after shipping every scarf we had in November and wondering how would we ever have enough scarves for December. But every day, more and more boxes of scarves showed up on my doorstep. Apparently volunteering and helping others is contagious. Once we spread the word about the need, people want to fill it. Congratulations, Barb.

I always emphasize how great **Handmade’s** volunteers are. They work tirelessly to make sure **Handmade** can donate a comfort scarf to every woman who needs one. Some knit/crochet comfort scarves. Some wind skeins of yarn into balls so others can make kits. Some make kits. Some make scarves and make kits. Some make kits and scarves as well as gift wrap scarves. Some do the shipping. Some help with office work. All are dedicated to helping abused women overcome the negative effects of domestic violence. They are a wonderful group of people and I am proud to know them and work with them.

Some of them, as we have seen above in the case of **Renee Hoffman**, are domestic abuse survivors themselves. **Terri Reinbolt** wrote: “Having been an abused wife during the 70s, finally able to break free in 1980, I promised myself I’d try to help anyone in the same situation in any way that I could. . . . Now you’ve given me the chance to put my yarn to good use.” Terri donated 10 scarves last December.

Brandy, a **Handmade** supporter on **Ravelry**, wrote something similar: “Will be shipping this week and starting a new one as well. . . . I’ve been where these girls are and sometimes all you need to know is that one person cares.” Our comfort scarves tell domestic violence victims that we care, that they are not alone.

Sacharissa, another **Handmade** volunteer, wrote the following note to the recipient of her scarf: “I do

not know you and you do not know me but I made this scarf for you with love in my heart. I cannot profess to know exactly what you are going through because I have never been in an abusive relationship, but I do know what it is like to lose everything and have to start over. It takes incredible strength! . . . and you have that strength. When you wear this scarf, please know I am thinking of you . . . “

In last month's Newsletter, I mentioned that the **Alexander Skarsgard** fan club adopted **Handmade** as its holiday charity. I had no idea what this would mean or even if it would mean anything. But as soon as **Jenny Conde** put info about **Handmade** up on the fan club's site, she told me members wanted to learn to knit so they could contribute. Their group sent 77 comfort scarves! They did a great job. Thank you so much, Jenny, for organizing this effort and to all your members who donated their time, effort, and creativity.

In this Newsletter, we have touched upon a few reasons people participate in Handmade. They have good hearts, they want to give back to the community, they were once abused themselves, they belong to an organization that encourages them to do good. Here's one more reason, and one I have observed myself, over and over again. Knitting, crocheting, scarfing in general, contributes to our mental health. **Newsweek Magazine** noticed this in their article, "31 Ways to Get Smarter in 2012." Suggestion # 12 was: "Join a Knitting Circle. Whip out the needles and make an awesome scarf. Refining motor ability can bolster cognitive skills." What a coincidence. Doing good is also good for us!

Finally, let's discuss Handmade's goals for 2012 and what Handmade needs to achieve these goals. Of course, we want to make at least another 15,000 comfort scarves and distribute them to the 57 shelters in CA who have already received our scarves. To that end, here's what we need:

- More volunteers to make scarves
- More volunteers to make kits

- More volunteers to wrap scarves
- More volunteers to ship scarves
- A volunteer coordinator
- A grant writer
- More \$\$\$\$ donations to cover the costs of shipping kits to volunteers and finished scarves to shelters.

Where do you fit in? Handmade is a very inclusive organization. We want to make a place for everyone. Welcome aboard!

If you want to donate scarves or yarn, please mail them to:

Handmade Especially for You
c/o Leslye Borden
30065 Grandpoint Lane
Rancho Palos Verdes CA 90275

If you want to send a check, please send it to the above address or follow this link to donate through **PayPal**.

Thanks in advance (yes, we will send a formal receipt for your records),

Leslye Borden, Founder
Handmade Especially for You
501(c)3 EIN: 26-9359292